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ABSTRACT

Although the Migrant Education Program dates from 1965, parental involvement in it is governed by very recent statutory and regulatory requirements. Current statutory requirements come from the Elementary Secondary Education Amendments (ESEA) of 1978. They concern the establishment of and consultation by State and Local Education Agencies (SEAs and LEAs) with Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), and are in accordance with the detailed ESEA requirements regarding PAC membership, election, meetings, responsibilities, and resources. Parental involvement in the program is further governed by the 1978 Migrant Education Program Regulations, which require each SEA and LEA to establish and consult with a PAC composed of people aware of migrant children's needs. Furthermore, the regulations require the agencies to develop strategies for effective parental project involvement. State reactions to the new requirements have been outstanding. Massachusetts, Oregon, and Colorado in particular are demonstrating their commitment to parental involvement objectives. While advocacy groups want more prescriptive PAC requirements, state and local program administrators do not. Therefore, the program is strengthening several requirements but distinguishing between state and local PACs, and projects of varying lengths. The program asks local projects to provide migrant parents with meaningful PAC involvement, opportunities for volunteerism and employment, and family-centered projects. (SB)

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

IN THE

MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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* STATUTORY AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Statutory

The Migrant Education Program is authorized by Subpart B (Sections 141-143) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as most recently revised by the Education Amendments of 1978 (Pub. L. 95-561). Section 142(a)(4) of Title I, ESEA, requires that—

> "in planning and carrying out programs and projects at both the State and local educational agency level, there has been and will be appropriate consultation with parent advisory councils established in accordance with regulations of the Commissioner (consistent with the requirements of section 125(a) [of title I]"

Section 125(a) of Title I, ESEA, contains a detailed set of requirements for local project parent advisory councils (PACs) for the Title I, ESEA, basic program in local educational agencies (LEAs) with low-income attendance areas. These requirements pertain to matters such as the membership of PACs, the election of members and officers, a minimum number of meetings each year, the responsibilities of the PACs, and the provision of appropriate training, materials, and resources to PACs.

Prior to the Education Amendments of 1978, the migrant education statute included no requirements with respect to parental involvement and advisory councils.

Regulatory

The Migrant Education Program Regulations (45 CFR Part 116d) were last issued as final regulations on November 13, 1978. The program is currently governed by these regulations. Although the current final regulations were developed prior to the enactment of the Education Amendments of 1978 (and thus, prior to the statutory requirement for PACs), they were drafted in anticipation of the requirement—for State and local PACs—in both the House and Senate versions of the education amendments.

Therefore, in order to have the new requirement already in place, the current final regulations were drafted with a §116d.37 (Parental Involvement) that requires State and local parent advisory councils. However, because the new migrant education statute had not yet become law, the regulatory requirement was written under the authority of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) that authorizes the Commissioner to require appropriate strategies of parental involvement in any Federal education program.

Section 116d.37(a) of the current final regulations requires—

> "each operating agency to...establish a parent advisory council whose views will be considered concerning the operation and evaluation of the present project, and the planning of future projects. This advisory council must be composed of people who

know the needs of migratory children. A majority of the advisory council must be parents of children who were, are being, or will be served by that project."

A similar requirement is in §116d.37(b) with respect to a State council.

Furthermore, in addition to the specific requirement in the program's regulations for State and local PACs, there is a broader requirement that the State program and its local projects develop a strategy for effective parental involvement in the program itself (e.g., parents as employees and volunteers, parents as home-teachers, etc.). The broader requirement for parental involvement has existed since the first proposed rules for the program (published on July 8, 1975), and the first enforceable regulations for the program (interim final regulations published on July 13, 1977). The program considers this broader requirement for parental involvement important for encouraging a continued creative involvement of parents in the program—beyond PACs.

A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) reflecting the revisions in the Education Amendments of 1978 was published on May 14, 1979. That NPRM placed the parental involvement and PAC requirements in a new §116d.55, but maintained the same requirements as the current final regulations. The preamble to the NPRM indicated that the Commissioner was proposing to continue to exempt the Migrant Education Program from some of the more detailed PAC requirements in Section 125(a) of Title I, ESEA, and that the basic requirement for establishing PACS would still be keeping "consistent" with the requirements of Section 125(a). However, the matter was open for comment and recommendations during the public meetings and comment period.

Many commenters at the public meetings (mostly advocacy groups) requested more detailed and prescriptive regulations for Migrant Education Program PACs. Additionally, a formal complaint was lodged with the Commissioner by the Migrant Legal Action Program (on behalf of the National Child Labor Committee and a number of other advocacy groups) contending that the statutory instruction that the Commissioner regulate Migrant Education Program PACs "consistent" with Section 125(a) of Title I, ESEA, required that those requirements found in Section 125(a) be adopted for this program.

The program is agreeing to strengthen the requirements for PACs in the currently-developing new final regulations for the program. The new final regulations will include a §116d.55 (What are the requirements for parental involvement?) that distinguishes—with respect to requirements—between the State parent advisory council, local parent advisory councils for "school year projects," and local parent advisory councils for "short-term projects." Short-term projects will continue to be exempted from the requirement for holding formal council elections and a minimum number of meetings each year. School year projects, however, will be required to hold elections.

Additionally, a new subsection now includes a number of general requirements that will apply to all types of councils. Those requirements

pertain to the reponsibilities of the councils, and the provision of appropriate training, materials, and resources to councils.

* EVOLUTION OF STATUTORY AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Statutory

1. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Pub. L. 89-10), through and including the Education Amendments of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-380)—

   No requirements for parental involvement or PACs.

2. Education Amendments of 1978 (Pub. L. 95-561)—

   Requirement for State and local PACs regulated "consistent" with the requirements of Section 125(a) of Title I, ESEA.

Regulatory

1. Program inception (Fiscal Year (FY) 1967) through 1975—

   No regulations, proposed or enforceable.

2. Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (July 8, 1975)—

   Proposed requirements for parental involvement and a State PAC.

3. Interim Final Regulations (July 13, 1977)—

   Requirements for parental involvement and a State PAC.

4. Final Regulations (November 13, 1978)—

   Requirements for parental involvement and State and local PACs, but no prescriptive PAC provisions.

5. NPRM (May 14, 1979)—

   Proposal to continue requirements for parental involvement and State and local PACs, with no prescriptive PAC provisions.

6. Final Regulations (Projected—December 21, 1979)—

   Requirements for parental involvement and State and local PACs, and some additional provisions for PACs, differentiated according to level and type of PAC (i.e., State program or local project; school year or short-term project). Also, identification of parental involvement as a priority project for discretionary funding under the new Section 143, Title I, ESEA, discretionary projects for the coordination of migrant education activities. The project will

include, possibly, interstate PAC development and research and training with respect to parental involvement.

* STATE EFFORTS IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The requirement for State and local PACs has been in statute and final regulations for less than one calendar year (the current fiscal year State programs are the first to operate fully under the new statute and regulations). As such, the program feels that the States have made an outstanding effort to implement these new requirements and are demonstrating their continued commitment to the objectives of parental involvement.

Some of the noteworthy efforts are as follows:

* The National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education has recognized the importance of parental involvement to the program and has formed a special committee of States to assist in the development and implementation of a national policy and strategy in parental involvement, and the possible establishment of a national parent advisory council.

* A majority of the States are now assigning a consultant at the SEA level the responsibility for implementing and coordinating parental involvement throughout the State migrant education program.

* Oregon's State PAC holds two full-day sessions to review, discuss, and act on the State Plan for Migrant Education—prior to the submittal of the plan to the U.S. Office of Education. After deliberations, the State PAC has an opportunity to make recommendations to the State Board of Education—with respect to the objectives, priorities, plans for program development, and other items contained in the State Plan.

* In Massachusetts, the parents assist in the State-wide identification and recruitment of children, help in prioritizing the delivery of program services, and assist in actual classroom activities.

* Colorado holds monthly meetings during the periods of time that the migratory parents are in residence in the local school districts. These meetings are designed to solicit feedback with respect to the acope and quality of project efforts.

  Colorado also emphasizes the use of parents as volunteers and aides in the classroom and in other aspects of the program. This effort fosters stronger and more regular parental involvement in the classroom activities of their children.

  Colorado sponsors family nights and picnics in conjunction with short, informational meetings for parents not serving on PACS or not actively participating in the program.

ISSUES IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The recent publication of new proposed rules for the Migrant Education Program has brought to light some concerns with respect to parental involvement.

These concerns are more fully discussed in the section on statutory and regulatory provisions. Basically, advocacy groups have encouraged more prescriptive requirements for parent advisory councils, including the election of members. State and local program administrators have generally argued against further regulation of PACs.

The program has chosen a somewhat middle-of-road position of including some additional requirements with respect to the councils, but distinguishing between the levels and types of councils (i.e., State program or local project-level council; school year or short-term project council) and the applicable requirements.

WHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?

The basic principle of effective parental involvement is that of working in full partnership <u>with</u> parents, rather than independently devising <u>for</u> parents and their children.

More specifically—

* Because parents know their own children so well, parents are in a good position to supply valuable information to teachers and administrators. This information can, in turn, improve the whole process of understanding, planning for, and teaching the individual child.

* Study after study has shown that unless children acquire certain knowledge in the home at a particular stage in life, it is difficult to compensate for their deficiencies at a later date.

* Also, we know from research and observation that the involvement of parents in the education of children tends to motivate their children to do better.

* An involved parent can function better as a teacher in the home. The educational and developmental growth of a child is not confined to the school experience, but rather, is a full-time activity in which parents play an important role.

* Parental help (either paid or volunteer) in the classroom can free the teachers from the more routine tasks and can allow for more individualized instruction and for important planning for students. To the extent that the more minor tasks are taken over by parents (classroom, lunchroom, and playground management; materials development, etc.), the children will benefit.

* Parents can add to the process of determining educational goals, and as well, to the planning, operation, and evaluation of the overall program itself.

* Parental involvement can help in the process of increasing public knowledge, understanding, and support for Migrant Education Program efforts.

* Parents learn more about education and educators when they're involved. More familiarity and understanding usually leads to more comfort, more cooperative efforts, and more support for the child and the school. Usually, this better relationship, in turn, influences the migrant child.

* The objectives that parents have for their children are usually the same as those of the Migrant Education Program. The mutual cooperation is beneficial and reinforcing.

The Migrant Education Program asks that local projects do the following to involve parents:

* Provide for the membership of parents on advisory councils. Make the involvement of the councils meaningful.

* Provide opportunities for parents to serve as volunteers and employees.

* Plan a family-centered focus to your project and cooperate with other agencies to foster the maximum coordination of services in health, education, and welfare.

* Educate parents to be "teachers in the home."